



Fri, 02/05/2010

CHAIRMAN KEN JENKINS TO WCA: LET'S WORK TOGETHER TO GIVE REAL TAX RELIEF TO WESTCHESTER TAXPAYERS

CHAIRMAN KEN JENKINS TO WCA: LET'S WORK TOGETHER TO GIVE REAL TAX RELIEF TO WESTCHESTER TAXPAYERS

Westchester County Board Chairman Ken Jenkins today issued the following statement after the Westchester County Association press conference, calling for the Legislature to enact County Executive Astorino's proposal seeking all non-union/non-represented managers within the County government to make a 15% contribution to their health care costs. Over the past several weeks, the Board has raised reasonable questions on enacting employee health insurance contributions. Yesterday, Chairman Jenkins announced the creation of a special committee of the Board to analyze and make recommendations on the fairest and most cost-effective way for the County to provide quality and affordable health care access to its employees at reduced costs. Today, he vowed to continue working in partnership with his colleagues, citizens and officials in finding real tax savings for residents.

"My colleagues and I appreciate the continued advocacy of the Westchester County Association and look forward to their continued partnership in resolving our county's economic issues. As we face another year of fiscal challenges, we must do everything necessary to immediately achieve optimal savings for the county's taxpayers. The Legislature fully supports the concept of employee contributions. However, in the search to pass off much-needed tax relief to residents, the County Board is required to act responsibly by reviewing every possible angle of such a complex issue. The taxpayers in this county want real savings, real innovation, real service improvement, and more value for their tax dollar. Now is the time to think critically about how we spend our money within county government and this Legislature takes that responsibility seriously. It's the Board's fiduciary responsibility to conduct the due diligence necessary to deliver real savings to our residents without exposing them to potentially damaging legal concerns. We have a legitimate opportunity to create a comprehensive and thorough plan and it must be done expeditiously."

"I've created this Special Committee on County Health Insurance Contributions, which will have its first meeting on Saturday morning, and they will aggressively be reviewing, analyzing and making final recommendations on the fairest and most economic way that the County can provide taxpayers long-term savings, while continuing to provide its employees with quality health care coverage. The goal of this committee will be to have a proposal in front of the Board for a full vote by June. The time we are taking now will not impact the proposed timeline of the County Executive's plan. It is important during these difficult economic times that we consider all viable options, including employee contribution, putting out a request for proposal for additional & less expensive health plans, pre-tax savings accounts, contribution tiers, and incentives for workers to opt out."

"However, we in government can ill afford to work in a vacuum. We'd like to ask the community to get involved and help with solutions. The need to find sustainable tax relief is a countywide problem that will require countywide engagement. That's why I invite members of the WCA and others throughout the county to join us in developing new strategies on health insurance delivery in our county by visiting our website, www.westchesterlegislators.com, and send us your suggestions. Now is the time to work together with our partners throughout the broader Westchester community to reduce costs responsibly and provide real relief to our county's taxpayers."